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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 000171

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SUBJECT: SOUTH KIVU: NEW FACES, OLD PROBLEMS

REF: 05 KINSHASA 1907

Classified By: Ambassador Roger Meece. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) Summary: In Jan 12-13 meetings with the Ambassador and EmbOff, the new South Kivu Governor, MONUC Pakistani Brigade Commander, and FARDC Military Commander all expressed their commitment to moving ahead with a positive agenda for the province. The discussions, however, revealed many familiar problems without obvious or easy answers, including poor inter-institutional communications and coordination, weak FARDC capacity, ongoing security sector issues, and provincial tensions focused on the High Plateau. On a positive note, the Governor in particular placed strong emphasis on inclusiveness, and made a point of having his RCD-G Vice Governor present for all discussions. As well, all interlocutors were encouraged by South Kivu's extraordinarily high voter registration and referendum participation rates. It is clear, however, that South Kivu is and will remain a volatile threat to regional and national stability for quite some time. End summary.

12. (C) Following a visit by CODEL Kolbe to Ituri District, the Ambassador and Embassy RSO traveled to South Kivu province January 12 - 13, primarily to meet the new Governor of the Province, Deogracias Buhamba-Hamba; new MONUC Pakistani Brigade Commander, General Magsood; and relatively new FARDC Military District Commander, General Agolowa.

13. (C) The new Governor comes from a long business background (reftel), and made a point of telling the visiting Americans that he wanted to convey a "different" image than that normally associated with Congolese politicians. In his description of plans and objectives, he placed a heavy stress on inclusiveness, describing for example his efforts to assemble a personal cabinet chosen to include representation of all major community (note: read geographic and ethnic) and religious groups in the province. He noted he subsequently published a list of those appointed to make its broadly-based character clear to all. The Governor, a representative of "the political opposition" under the Transition Government allocation formula, made a point of including the RCD-Goma Vice Governor in the introductory meeting, and both were also at an evening dinner hosted by the Ambassador. (Comment: The province's other Vice Governor, also newly appointed, had not yet taken up her duties in Bukavu by January 12. End comment.)

14. (C) In separate meetings, the FARDC Military District Commander and MONUC Brigade Commander also talked about a positive agenda to continue moves against "negative forces" in the provinces, restore order, and support the Transition, and in particular the electoral process. All professed satisfaction and pride in the very high rate of voter registration that had been achieved, as well as the extraordinary voter turnout in South Kivu in the December constitutional referendum, estimated at around 90 percent. The discussions, however, revealed a number of flaws in this picture. General Agolowa, for example, confirmed that the FARDC Third Integrated Brigade had completed its deployment to South Kivu, an encouraging development as the Brigade represents the first deployment of a FARDC integrated unit to the province. Responding to questions, however, he admitted that none of the Belgian-provided equipment for the Brigade had been moved from Kalemie (Katanga) to Bukavu, and even professed not to know whether the GDRC or Belgium was responsible for the shipment within the DRC. All interlocutors confirmed that lack of support to FARDC troops represents a major ongoing problem. Agolowa revealed another problem as he took a telephone call during the meeting, apparently from someone complaining about the actions of Republican Guard (GSSP) troops, based in South Kivu since last month's visit of President Kabila. With obvious irritation, Agolowa told his caller that these troops did not report to him, but that he would take up the problem with the GSSP commander. The new MONUC Brigade Commander indicated his concern about the lack of availability of FARDC units able to support operations in the province, including the FARDC battalions that had received training from the former Pakistani MONUC Brigade. The newly deployed FARDC Third Integrated Brigade could do little without its equipment.

15. (C) All confirmed that tensions in the High Plateau area (previously reported) centered on problems within the

Banyamulenge community are a problem, with an attendant risk of open clashes that could escalate at any time. None of the Congolese officials, however, agreed on a solution. The Governor and Vice Governor both agreed that the issue has a major political component to it, although they disagreed on

the specific characterization of the politics. Both also agreed that a move by Agolowa to name an identified new brigade commander for the largely Banyamulenge FARDC Brigade now encamped around Minembwe was a good step. Agolowa, however, in the later meeting with the Ambassador denied any intent, much less action, to name the identified officer as a new brigade commander, dismissing him as too junior. Agolowa said no decision had been made on the matter. From the various and contradictory accounts, it was clear communications between the provincial governor's administration, the military, and the new MONUC Brigade have major gaps.

16. (C) Comment: Some of the observed problems and lack of coordination can be attributed to the fact that these key players are all relatively new to their offices and are still getting adjusted. The MONUC Brigade Commander, for example, was obviously well briefed, but had only assumed command three weeks before, and was still clearly in the process of establishing his relationships. Likewise, the Governor, who is originally from South Kivu, appears well intentioned and motivated. His willingness to include the Vice Governor in discussions, despite obviously different views, was in contrast to his predecessor, and was also encouraging. The Governor is new to office, however, and for that matter new to politics. He has no particular background in military and security issues. Some of these problems may be, and hopefully will be, mitigated with time. Underlying issues, however, including weak FARDC capacity, and the tensions in the Banyamulenge area of the High Plateau have long histories and are not susceptible to quick or easy solutions. In the meantime, there is always the potential of a clash, for example between rival Banyamulenge groups around Minembwe, escalating to more widespread conflict. The FDLR threat in the province, of course, remains a major concern as well. In brief, while the overall security and political environment have certainly improved in the province over the past year, and the success of the voter registration and referendum exercises in South Kivu is encouraging, the province will remain a volatile threat to stability in the region for the foreseeable future. End comment.

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